

MODULAR LEARNING

Module learning is an effective and beneficial tool for our volunteers. It allows volunteers to plan ahead as they are aware of what topics will be covered in each module. It also encourages volunteers to fully absorb and understand what they are learning — as the individual modules do not necessarily have to be completed simultaneously making it easier for our volunteers to process information in segments.

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MODULE 1: VOLUNTEERING

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Takeaways

- Why volunteer with Ohio State?
- Why is volunteering important to the university?
- What is the universal understanding of ‘Who is a volunteer?’
- What is the university’s understanding of ‘Who is a volunteer?’
- What qualities are universal to great volunteers?
- What skills distinguish good volunteers from great volunteers?
- How do our alumni and friends ensure that Ohio State maintains a successful volunteer community?
- What are the expectations for our alumni and friends?
- Who do volunteers work with at Ohio State?
- How are volunteers and university programs evaluated?
- Can a volunteer be dismissed?
- Does the university recognize efforts and achievements of volunteers?
- How to find volunteer opportunities at Ohio State?

Introduction

“You can never pay back, so you should always try to pay forward.”

- Coach Woody Hayes

Many universities in their early days rely heavily on volunteers to do the work that is performed later by paid staff. Ohio State is no exception. Our volunteers come from professional backgrounds and fill key roles in running organizations, handling day-to-day tasks, and raising funds – which are key skills to be outstanding university volunteers.

Why volunteer with Ohio State?

Buckeyes share a special bond. We take great pride in our alma mater. No matter where you are in the world, when fellow alumni meet, an immediate connection to our Buckeye spirit is reaffirmed – to lead with purpose and compassion. Volunteering is a great way to connect with the university, pay forward, grow one’s personal and professional networks, and put leadership skills to good use. It is one the most challenging, yet rewarding, adventures our alumni and friends will experience.

Why is volunteering important to the university?

The university depends on its volunteers to help achieve strategic plans and goals while sustaining momentum and serving our community. The university recognizes that the time, talent, and treasure our volunteers contribute to Ohio State is extraordinary. Our volunteers provide assistance to the university and other causes aimed at enhancing the lives of our students, faculty, and staff. We rely on our volunteers’ expertise, and the diverse background they represent. This community plays a fundamental role in developing and supporting pathways between campus and Buckeyes around the world.

What is the universal understanding of ‘who is a volunteer?’

A volunteer is an individual who makes a commitment of time and energy for the benefit of the university and society, the environment, or individuals outside one’s immediate family. This commitment comes without financial gain and is undertaken freely and by choice.

What is the university understanding of ‘who is a volunteer?’

An Ohio State volunteer is someone who believes that learning is a lifelong endeavor, desires to continue their intellectual connection with the university, and is driven to strengthen the community of alumni and friends who share their passion to pay forward in support of university goals.

What qualities are universal to great volunteers?

- *Enthusiasm* – A volunteer who is enthusiastic and positive about their volunteerism and responsibility is often a pleasure to work with. A great volunteer will have the same enthusiasm whether they’re doing their favorite part of the planning and executing or operating in a supporting role.

- *Initiative* – A great volunteer will be sure to know their role and responsibilities, and won't hesitate to go a step beyond what the role entails while respecting boundaries, protocol, and the expectations of the university. They proactively seek ways to improve their work and apply their professional strengths to the tasks.
- *Professionalism* – Volunteers represent the university, and therefore must understand the importance of professionalism: everything from suitable dress code to appropriate demeanor.
- *Reliability* – Volunteer recognize the importance of trust and reliability and will commit to the time the job takes. Of course, life happens, and a volunteer may occasionally have to cancel, but will do so with as much notice as possible.

What skills distinguish good volunteers from great volunteers?

- *A Fearless Approach* – To be a volunteer requires a lot of courage. Often, a volunteer will need to push far beyond their comfort zone and adjust to putting others needs first.
- *Infinite Patience* – A bottomless reservoir of patience and tenacity are crucial skills of a volunteer. When an individual first decides to volunteer, they may have big dreams about bringing about an innovative change. However, when they start working, the realities of the situation may provide unexpected challenges requiring the volunteer to pivot.
- *Think Creatively* – A good volunteer takes instructions and executes them. A great volunteer doesn't just do their work to the best of their ability, but also finds newer, better ways of getting it done. As a volunteer, there will be many times where you are faced with complex situations, which require novel solutions.
- *Willingness to Take Initiative* – Volunteers may experience too much work with too few people to handle it. Once familiar with the assigned work, it's important that the volunteer take initiative and become more proactive about the duties.
- *Remain Humble* – Volunteers recognize that they are there to help, not to prove themselves. Volunteering requires individuals to be selfless and focus on how they can create meaningful impact. Great volunteers understand this and are eager to do everything possible to bring about positive change.
- *Driven by Passion* – The one thing that keeps a great volunteer going is genuine passion for the work. Passion can help the volunteer stop looking at the work as an unattainable goal.
- *Ability to Work in Teams* – Volunteering is about working towards something bigger than oneself. Great volunteers distance themselves from arguments and politics because they are focused on more important things. With volunteering, there will always be projects where you will have to be part of a team. Every volunteer will need to recognize that each team member brings a special set of skills to the table! It is amazing what can be accomplished when working as part of a team — so much more than what one would be able to on their own. Learning the art of teamwork will be one of the biggest lessons gained through the experience.

How do our alumni and friends ensure that Ohio State maintains a successful volunteer community?

Primarily, volunteers need to believe in the core mission and purpose of the university. In addition, there needs to be a two-way understanding and balance between our volunteers and university staff, faculty, and representatives.

What is expected of and experienced by our volunteers is often the same pulls and pushes that paid employees would have: career and family responsibilities as well as financial. The university will do its best to recognize these concerns and try to mitigate them through appreciation of volunteer work, and the creation of roles within the organization.

Additional opportunities can include mentoring, or the chance to participate in programming. We encourage committee and small group work because collaboration spurs new ideas, imparts intense learning – and brings in continuous improvements. There is often shifting of volunteer roles as individuals choose to increase and decrease involvement as their personal time allows.

What are the expectations for our alumni and friends?

The university expects our volunteers to come prepared to work and come equipped with:

- *Volunteer skills.* We recognize that our volunteers have specialized knowledge such as computer programming, advertising, or conflict mediation. A volunteer who donates their skills on an 'as needed' basis can be the perfect complement to our Buckeye Volunteer Community.
- *Renewed energy and excitement.* Even the most dedicated workers can get burned out working on the same thing day in and day out. A volunteer can bring a fresh perspective and enthusiasm for the work; this can help to revitalize staff, and may help move projects in exciting new directions.

- *An increased community ownership.* The more alumni and friends are involved as volunteers, the easier it will be to gain support to implement new volunteer ideas to support university goals. Also, by encouraging volunteers, we can be sure that our goals are in-line with what the Buckeye community needs.

How do the volunteers work with Ohio State?

- *University and unit leadership.* This may include everyone from the president to deans.
- *Faculty and staff members.* These are the people who know best what work needs to be done, so their involvement is vital.
- *Students.* Volunteers will be working directly with students in many cases such as mentorship.

How are volunteers and university programs evaluated?

In our comprehensive volunteer program, individuals and groups are evaluated on how well they are accomplishing their set goals. This evaluation includes how well volunteers are helping the university fulfill its mission as a land grant university, as well as how well their work is helping to advance the excellence and visibility of the Buckeye community.

Can a volunteer be dismissed?

Sometimes a volunteer simply is not enjoying the work as anticipated. And although dismissal is a last resort, if a volunteer is not fulfilling the job they agreed to, action can be taken for the overall good of the respective volunteer group.

Does the university recognize efforts and achievements?

Absolutely. Recognition and appreciation are the most important things Ohio State does for its volunteers. The university pays tribute to volunteers by recognizing the work that is or has been performed. Ohio State knows that if someone feels important enough to be recognized by the university – it is much more likely that they will remain an active volunteer. Some of the ways recognition occurs at Ohio State are:

- *Service awards,* include but are not limited to The Ohio State University Alumni Association's awards program which has been honoring alumni and others who have brought extraordinary credit to Ohio State. These honors include: Alumni Medalist Award, Archie M. Griffin Professional Achievement Award, Dan L. Heinlen Award, Diversity Champion Award, E. Gordon Gee Spirit of Ohio State Award, Josephine Sitterle Failer Award, Ralph Davenport Mershon Award, and Robert M. Duncan Alumni Citizenship Award. In addition, every year, each of the Ohio State colleges recognize and honor some of the outstanding alumni whose accomplishments and services are tangible evidence of the growing distinction within each college. These honors include: Distinguished Alumni Achievement, Young Alumni Achievement, and Alumni Distinguished Service.
- *Celebrations,* such as banquets, lunches, or award dinners provide the perfect place to connect on campus for learning, connection, and so much more.
- *Media attention,* including coverage in Ohio State or unit-based publications and social media channels.
- *Gratitude and a personal touch,* such as meetings with leadership and, personal appreciation letters.
- *More responsibility* may also be awarded to outstanding volunteers.

How to find volunteer opportunities at Ohio State

go.osu.edu/buckeyeadvocates

ohiostate.volunteermatch.org

osu.edu/alumni/about-us/the-engagement-center

osu.edu/alumni/pay-forward/volunteer-opportunities

artsandsciences.osu.edu/alumni-friends/stay-engaged

In summary

Volunteering can be a tremendously rewarding experience, both for the individual who offers time, talent, and treasure and for Ohio State.

References

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